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EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY



Carl Nicholas Conrad

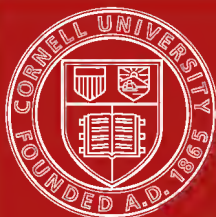
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Epicurean Philosophy And Its Influence on Human Thought



By
Carl Nicholas Conrad, Ph. D., S. T. D.
E.V.

By CARL NICHOLAS CONRAD.

Erroneous Views of Our Life. (English)

Epicurean Philosophy and Its Influence on Human Thought. (English)

Gospel Truths or Short Sermon-Essays on Free Texts. (English)

Conversations with God. Prayer-Book. (German)

A Christmas Programme in Three Parts. (German)

Christian Narratives From the Kingdom of God. (German)

*"A little Philosophy inclineth a man's mind to
Atheism, but depth of Philosophy bringeth men's
minds about to religion."*

—Bacon.

PREFACE.

It is the intention of the author in presenting this volume to elucidate a false philosophical theory which abounds for centuries in the world. Christian virtue, however, is compared and upheld as paramount to Epicurean Philosophy and its pseudo-doctrines.

The author has very ^{max} naturally quoted freely from ancient and modern authorities.

C. N. C.

Rochester, N. Y.,
January, 1917.



"The philosopher is the lover of wisdom and truth; to be a sage, is to avoid the senseless and the depraved."

PART I.

"The contemplations of man either penetrate unto God, or are circumferred to nature, or are reflected or reverted upon himself.

Out of which several inquiries there arise three kinds of knowledge, Divine Philosophy, natural philosophy, and human philosophy, or humanity."

The object-matter of philosophy may be distinguished as God, or nature, or man.

It examines the grounds of human certitudo, and verifies the trustworthiness of human knowledge. It inquires into the causes of all beings, and ascertains the nature of all existences by reducing them to unity. It is not peculiar to any

department, but common to all departments of knowledge. Man first examines phenomena, but he is not satisfied till he has reduced them to their causes, and when he has done so he asks to determine the value of the knowledge to which he has attained. This is philosophy properly so called,—“the mother and governing science”—“the science of sciences”—“the science of first principles,” or as Peemans correctly states:—“*Philosophia est scientia rerum per causas primas, recto rationis usu comparatus.*”—

It has been usual to refer the origin of philosophy to the genius of the Hellenic race. Owing to the modern tendency to enlarge the scope of inductive inquiry, and to pursue the scientific method of comparison, there has recently been a disposition to include Oriental speculation among the sources of philosophical life and activity.

There can be no doubt that the Hindo mind has always evinced peculiar aptitude for the subtleties of metaphysical thought. Indian religion and Indian philosophy have been, broadly speaking, identical. (vid. Cousin's Modern Phil. Vol. No.I.) The Vedos and the Vedantas, which constitute the literary treasure of Brahman priests and philosophers, contain in abundance speculation and reflection upon the mystery of Being. The great rival systems of the East, Brahmanism and Buddhism, profoundly as they differ, are alike in this:—they aim offering a speculative and practical solution of the perplexities of human thought and the difficulties of human life.—

“The Hellenic races were, intellectually and aesthetically, the most gifted of antiquity. They produced the most perfect forms of architecture and of sculpture; by swift steps they brought the

drama to its highest point; they wrought with a master-hand in every form of literature, both historical and imaginative." It is not surprising, then, that in pure thought they should not merely have excelled all nations, but should have fashioned the very moulds into which the intellect of all other nations is compelled to run and take shape.

Zeller has pointed out that the Greek religion was of a peculiarly idealistic character, and was distinguished by the absence both of a professional hierarchy and of theological dogmatism;—and that these characteristics largely contributed to the freedom of Grecian speculation.

"Socrates brought philosophy down on earth, to man."—To him human nature, human life, human virtues and vices, human thought and knowledge were "the chief concern".

He was a true philosopher, a lover of wisdom; and a true moralist, who rose, in moral character, above the standard of his day, who both exemplified and taught human virtue. And with regard to religion, it is unquestionable that his notions of the Supreme Being were exalted, and that the charge of atheism brought against him was only just in so far as he was confessedly above the popular polytheism, whilst yet he did not yield to the irreligious influence to which so many of his contemporaries succumbed.—

It is from Socrates, as from a fountain-head, that the living streams of psychology and of ethics have flowed down through the centuries of human history.

Plato may be regarded as the great idealist of the Greeks. Not content to limit our knowledge to the sensible and changing world, he held that

Reason contemplates eternal truth. His theory of ideas, of reminiscence, of the metaphysical good, are characteristic in a special manner, and can only be understood by patient study of the "Dialogues". Perhaps Plato was the sublimest, and Aristotle the most comprehensive intellect of antiquity.—As Plato was scholar to Socrates, so Aristotle was pupil to Plato. The great Stagairite seems to have acquired all knowledge at that time in the possession of men; he wrote on Physics and metaphysics, on Logic and Rhetoric, on Ethics and Politics; and indeed was the founder of some of these realms of human knowledge.—We are conscious that the horizon narrows in passing from such noble systems as Plato or Aristotle to the subsequent Philosophy of Greece. Later schools turned away from these vaster and profounder studies, and fortunately or unfortunately

directed their attention to the individual life, hence they were really and strikingly more moral than their predecessors.— Zeno, 300 B. C., lectured in Athens, on the painted porch from which his sect took their designation 'Stoics'.—

The Stoics, like the early thinkers, had their system of physics; it has been called a 'pantheistic Materialism";—'the world is God's body, God the world's soul.' Their system of morals harmonized with their belief that reason, order, and law are present throughout the universe. They extolled virtue; and, though they did not go so far as the Cynics in dispising all pleasure, yet they also conceived that [man should be independent of circumstances, and should find his well-being in following nature and reason.] The Stoics were particularly celebrated for their cultivation of Logic.— The rival sect of the Epicureans arose

about the same time with the Stoics. The Founder of the Epicurean school was Epicurus, born 342 B. C., he was the son of an Athenian who had emigrated to Samos. In his thirty-sixth year he opened at Athens a philosophical school, over which he presided till his death (in the year 270 B. C.).

Epicurus's moral character has been frequently assailed; but his life, according to the most credible testimony, was in every respect blameless, and he himself alike amiable and estimable. Schwegler in his *History of Philosophy* correctly states: Much of what is reported about the sensuality of the Epicurean Sty is in general considered to be calumny. (Epicurus denominated philosophy as activity which realizes a happy life through ideas and arguments. It has essentially for him, therefore, a practical object, and its results, as he de-

sires, in ethics which are to teach us how to attain to a life of felicity. The Epicureans did, indeed, accept the usual division of philosophy into logic (called canonic by them), physics, and ethics. But logic, limited to the investigation of the criteria of truth, was considered by them only as ancillary to physics. Physics, again, existed only for ethics, in order to secure men from those vain terrors of empty fables, and that superstitious fear which might obstruct their happiness. [No other system troubled itself as little about the system troubled itself as little about the foundation on which it rested; none confined itself so exclusively to the utterances of its founder.]

Such was the dogmatism with which Epicurus propounded his precepts, such the conviction he entertained of their usefulness, that his pupils were required to commit summaries of them to

memory; and the superstitious devotion for the founder was with his approval carried to such a length, that not the slightest deviation from his tenets was permitted on a single point. (The aim of philosophy was, with them, to promote human happiness.) All science which does not serve this end is superfluous and worthless.

[Ethics with Epicurus is defined as happiness. Happiness, according to him, is synonymous with pleasure, for this is what every being naturally seeks to acquire. He distinguished between two species of pleasure, viz.: (*Stabilitas voluptatis*, Cic., *De Fin.*, II. 3), the pleasure of rest, and *Voluptas in motu*, Cic., *ibid.*); the pleasure of motion. The former is defined as freedom from trouble and labor, the latter as joy and cheerfulness. In Principle the Epicurean ethics is a system of egoism; for the advantage of the in-

dividual, which is treated as identical with the happiness of the individual, is required in all cases to furnish the law of action.

Even friendship is explained by this Principle, —Friendship, according to Epicurus, is the best means of assuring to man all the enjoyments of life. ~~Epicurus himself is the author of the aphorism~~ (ascribed to him in Plutarch, *Non posse suaviter vici sec. Epicurum*, 15.4): "It is more pleasant to do than to receive good." Epicureanism aided in softening down the asperity and exclusiveness of ancient manners and in cultivating the social virtues of companionableness, compatibility, friendliness, gentleness, beneficence and gratitude, and so performed a work whose merit, I think, should not be wholly underestimated.]

He, however, despised learning and culture, the researches of the grammarians and the love of

the historians, and declared that it was most conducive to simplicity of feeling "to be uncontaminated by learned rubbish." In his letter to Menoeceus he speaks as follows and thus gives us an elucidation of his ethics: "Be not slack to seek wisdom when thou art young, nor weary in the search thereof when thou art grown old. For no age is too early or too late for the health of the soul. Exercise thyself, therefore, in the things which bring happiness; for verily, while it is with thee thou wilt have everything, and when it is not, thou wilt do everything if so thou mayest have it." ["Accustom thyself in the belief that death is nothing to us, for good and evil are only where they are felt, and death is the absence of all feeling." :—therefore, a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes enjoyable the mortality of life, not by adding to years an illimit-

able time, but by taking away the yearning after immortality. Foolish, therefore, is the man who says that he fears death, not because it will pain when it comes, but because it pains in the prospect."]

He is worthy of commiseration who says: "that it were best not to be born, but when once one is born, to pass with greatest speed the gates of Hades." If he, in truth, believes this, why does he not depart from this life? There is nothing to hinder him, if he has truly come to this conclusion." Thou must remember that the future is neither wholly ours, nor wholly not ours, so that neither may we wholly wait for it as if it were sure to come, nor wholly despair as if it were not to come. Thou must keep in mind that of desires some are natural, and some are groundless; and that of the natural some are necessary as well

as natural, and some are natural only."

"We call pleasure the Alpha and Omega of a blessed life. Pleasure is our first and kindred good. By pleasure, we mean the absence of pain in the body and trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking feasts and of revelry, not the pleasure of sexual love, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of a splendid table, which produce a splendid life:—it is sober reasoning, searching out the reasons for every choice, and banishing those beliefs through which greatest tumults take possession of the soul. Of all this, the beginning, and the greatest good, is prudence. Virtue grows into one with a pleasant life, and a pleasant life is inseparable from it as such. Better were it, indeed, to believe the legend of the gods, than be in bondage to the destiny taught by the physical philosophers; for the

theological myth gives a faint hope of deprecating divine wrath by honoring the gods, while the fate of the philosophers is deaf to all supplications."

The theory on which Epicurus based his explanation of the world was a revival of an earlier philosophy. The earlier philosophers, Thales (600 B. C.), and his successors, had attempted to explain the variety of material found on the earth by supposing it to be the last in the series of metamorphoses of some one primitive body.

Their idea of this original matter was concrete and sensuous. They had at first no conception of matter as something inert and inanimate, but believed it to be endued with the spirit or personality which they felt in themselves; and even when they got rid of this vitality or animism, they supposed that the primeval matter had quali-

tative differences inherent and inseparable. It was air, or earth, or water; and the result of this form of investigation was to assume the existence of these various modes of matter from the very first, and to argue that they underwent new phases in the course of time. They were in the line which would have tended in the course of long and tedious investigations towards a doctrine of the chemical elements; but it need scarcely be said that ages would have elapsed ere experiments and analysis, the balance and the blow-pipe could have led to such a result.

The current of philosophic thought flowed too rapidly to allow such experimental delays. Speculation leapt forth to anticipate research. The Atomic school of Leucippus and Democritus (430 B. C.) advanced a step in the solution of the question, by suggesting a new conception of mat-

ter or body, which threw off all the old attributes as secondary or occassional, and went down to primal attributes constituting the nature of body as such. The distinction between the attributes, called (by Locke and others) primary, and believed to constitute the abstract and eternal essence of matter, and the other attributes, called secondary, and considered to flow from the relations between the primary qualities of body, on the one hand, and the human organism, on the other,—is apparently due to Democritus. The three qualities which are usually said to distinguish atom from atom are shape, order, and position. (Aristotle. *Metaphy.*, 1.4.) To these should, perhaps, be added differences in size and weight. The last-mentioned, indeed, is a disputable point.

There are passages from which it seems that

Democritus regarded weight as not an attribute of the atoms, but only of the aggregations which they compose. (Plutarch, *Plac. Phil.* 1, 3, 29.) But probably these statements are to be taken in a different sense. They may mean that the atom in all cases, however it may vary in size never reaches a size which is perceptible to physical vision, and, therefore, inasmuch as the weight varies directly with the size in the case of atoms, the atom is never ponderable except when it combines with other atoms to form a body. The atom, then, is indivisible; it never directly comes within the range of our perception. Its differences of size, shape, and position never emerge into the region commanded by the senses. The atom is an intellectual, not a mathematical point. It has magnitude: it is not mere position. But we cannot break it up really into smaller por-

tions (hence its name). Being indivisible, it is also indestructible.

The atoms are in themselves imperishable; they have always been in existence and always will be. One aggregation of atoms after another will fall into pieces; fabric after fabric in visible world, from the vegetable and animals around us, up to the terrestrial mass itself, and the sun and the stars, and inward and unseen structures like the soil and mind of man—all these will be dissolved; but the atoms which enter into their composition will remain unchanged, ever new and fresh, ready to form other structures in ages yet to come.

Such was in its larger outlines the theory of the universe which Epicurus adopted from Democritus, and developed for his own ends. An endless expanse and immeasurable depth of space,

an abyss to which there are no bonds, no bottom, no end; and in the vast reaches of this waste of space, infinitely numerous hosts of solid, imperishable molecules, too small singly to meet the edge of human vision, ever in motion, and by means of that motion entering upon combinations more or less lasting, but in no instance everlasting,—such is the universe which presented itself to the intelligence of an Epicurean. There are, however, two points to be noticed when we compare the atomic theory of Epicurus with that of modern times. In the first place, the ancient atom was mainly a hypothesis, invented to afford a simple explanation of phenomena. It rested, so far as we know, on slight experimental basis. Modern atomism, on the contrary, is supported by a large amount of experimental evidence; it is a conclusion forced upon us by exact weighing

and measurement. When we ask for the character of the primeval units, the ancient and modern theories part company. Epicurus gives us a picturesque scene in his atomic hosts. Applying his mental telescope, we see accumulations of small bodies, of every variety of shape, catching hold of each other's hooks and corners or rebounding from their rounded sides. Geometrical solids touching each other in their course and forming geometrical aggregations, this the kind of atomism in vogue with Epicurus. Newton, in the close of his *Optics*, suggested a somewhat similar conception of the world. It seemed probable to him that "God in the beginning formed matter in solid, mossy, hard, impenetrable particles, . . . of several sizes and figures and several proportions of space, and perhaps of different densities and forces." But in Newton's

idea, we see a new property of the atoms emphasized, that of force.

The atom has not merely geometrical aspects; it is treated as dynamical also. In the modern theories of molecules and vortex-rings we have an advance in the equipment of the ultimate elements. No longer do they, almost devoid of properties themselves, generate the complex variety of properties in the actual world. The modern molecule is a highly-organized body; it possesses in miniature the powers of spontaneity and movement which are operative in the larger macrocosm, it is perpetually vibrating, with an endless capacity of changing its form. No longer a hard, dead thing, it ^{can (S.B.)} ~~was~~ almost be described as instinct with life. It is, moreover, subjected to measurement. Considerations like these would not have been to the mind of Epicurus:—they

would have savored of useless curiosity. The real advance of modern atomism, as seen in the speculations of Kant or of Boscovich, is in the substitution of forces for hard points. Matter is looked upon as constituted by centres of forces, in a complex set of relations, dependent one upon another, and yet resisting each other's influence. The appearance of extension and solidity is pronounced to rest upon the reciprocal attractions and repulsions of these active centres.

It was something like this that constituted the drift of the monadology of Leibnitz (1646-1711.) The founder of the German Philosophy of the 18th Century, "that real giant of German Philosophy." The pond, he says, which looks a mere mass of water, is really teeming with myriads of live fish;—every portion of matter is like a garden luxuriant in vegetation. If we

could only see deep enough we should see endless life, and life within life, throughout the universe. The ultimate realities of the world are monads. These are not mere dead matter but endowed with vital forces, even with the beginnings of consciousness. Every monad is complete in itself, and lets nothing enter from without;—it has a principle in itself which controls the series of its changes. There is within it, as it were, a spring, which has been wound up in the beginning, and now goes on unwinding itself in an endless chain of phenomena, without interruption from forces external. Each monad is in a way the whole world. But although not in any way dependent upon each other, the monads are essentially parts of a great plan or pre-established Harmony. In the monadology of Leibnitz we find an attempt, based upon the conception of a divine

plan, to combine the fullest recognition of the individuality of the elements in the universe with the peculiar universality which they possess as so many little worlds, whose limitations consists, not in the extent of their contents, but in the comparative disorder and displacement of their reflective or appreciative power due to what modern science terms the parallax of their position. At a glance we observe the opposite of Epicurean doctrine. I have dwelt at length upon his "atomic Theory" and have endeavored to show that Democritus and Epicurus are the great exponents of antiquity concerning atomism and its doctrine, even imaginative and theoretical as it is, yet directly or indirectly throughout the ages of history yea, even modern scholars and thinkers as well, have sought their basis of investigation. Concerning nature or the nature of man, or even

the nature of philosophical inquiry of ancient antiquity we may exclaim in the well-known expression of Haller:—"In's Innere der Natur dringt Kein erschaff'ner Geist"!

Careless opponents have described Epicurus as an atheist. The existence of the Gods is what he never denies: what he, on the contrary, asserts as a fundamental truth. The question on which he diverges from popular faith is not whether there are Gods, but what is their nature and their relation to man. He assigns them an abode in the vacant spaces between the worlds. It is a place of calm and mists, and wintry snow and frosts never come. Its smiling landscapes are bathed in perpetual summerlight. This was the Epicurean heaven; for them there was no hell. The Gods were of human shape; not globes of rolling matter, nor immaterial forms sharing

in endless motion. They have a body, but it is not as our body; and they have blood in their veins, but it is different from human blood. In God he believes he will find all that is best and highest in himself. In order to understand his philosophy of cosmology a contrast with the cosmology of Aristotle may be feasible. With Aristotle the earth, and all that lies beneath the circle of the moon—the special region of humanity—is an inferior province of the universe. The home of the highest reason is beyond the sublunary sphere. The earth lies in the centre of the universe:—there is a limited and rounded totality of things. The order and disposition of the world are eternal: it has had no beginning, and will have no end. There is no empty space in the universe. The starry sphere is in immediate contact with the God-head. All the celestial spheres are

regarded as beings endowed with life, and capable of intelligent action.

The ethereal sphere is the home of superior intelligence. Epicurus differs greatly from Aristotle. Instead of a central system we have an endless number of cosmical bodies, no one of which is nearer the centre than another. The earth is no longer an absolute middlepoint around which the starry world revolves. The starry sphere itself is made of a matter not of transcendant quality, but of the same constitution as our earth. The world is no longer an intelligent and vital being, but a mere product of mechanical unions, coherent only for a while but destined to disruption. All matter is heavy, all tends downward.

Epicurus set aside the pictorially-complete conception of Aristotle for a new idea, in which the

earth and its starry and planetary attendants, as well as sun and moon, sink into a mere unit in the endless series of the world. The ancients are never tired of expressing their surprise and even contempt of the astronomical doctrines of Epicureanism. Epicurus has had many resurrections. His spirit has lived more in his ethics and hedonism, than in his other philosophical speculations.

The powerful influence of his ethical and hedonistic doctrines upon scholars and thinkers and even the lay-masses as such is wonderful and particularly recognizable to the present time.

The Academy, or Platonists; the Lyceum, or Peripatetics, followers of Aristotle; the Stoics of the Porch; and the Epicureans of the Garden—continued to hold their position at Athens for several centuries. All had their adherents, their advocates. One great philosopher was formed in

the Epicurean school. Lucretius Carus (95-52 B. C.), author of the didactic poem *De Rerum Natura*, whose verse is steeped in the doctrines of Democritus and Epicurus. The poem, posthumously edited, did not receive the last touches of its author's hand. It is full of casual or unskillful junctures, and wanting in continuity; it emphasizes certain sides of the system to the neglect of others, and it is too much encumbered by the exigencies of verse to be able to follow freely the subtleties of argument. Yet, as the only exposition of Epicureanism by a zealous convert to its creed, it claims a unique value amongst the authorities on this subject. In some aspects, however, the standard and primary authority for the system, as well as for the history, which others may supplement and correct, but cannot entirely supersede, is the tenth book of the history of the

lives and opinions of the ancient philosophers, by Diogenes Laertius. This book may be regarded as a paraphrase, an extremely unsatisfactory and tantalizing performance.

It is a compilation made in the third century A. D. from the contents of a large number of works on the history of the several sects of ancient philosophy—works which have not come down to us. In the tenth book, which is entirely devoted to Epicurus, faults are not so prominent as in other parts of the work.

Diogenes has been supposed to be either an adherent or admirer of Epicurus.

Cicero and Seneca both tell us a good deal about Epicureanism, but in a fragmentary way, however. In his "De Finibus," his "De Natura Deorum," and the Tusculan Question," Cicero introduces the Epicurean doctrine, supported and

expounded by Torquatus and Velleius in the first and second of these works respectively. Cicero seems a fair and honest reporter of what he does understand, but his method of composition, consisting in free translation and condensation of some of the advocates of the systems he expounded, was not favorable either to depth of insight or harmony of exposition. ♣

There are places in the Tusculan Desputations where he seems to forget himself, and holds a brief for Epicureanism without perceiving the contradiction in which he indulges with previous statements. His information is mainly confined to the ethical portions of Epicureanism, and even there it leaves behind an impression of inactness and want of contact with the original ideas, which he looks at too exclusively through a literary medium. Still, as the contemporary of Lu-

cretius, his estimates of Epicureanism in Rome are full of interest.

In the year 79 B. C. Cicero spent six months at Athens among the Philosophers, chiefly attending the lectures of Zeno of Sidon on Epicureanism. Philedemus, another Epicurean writer of the Ciceronian epoch, has, through the discoveries at Herculaneum, attained a celebrity which his intrinsic merits would scarcely claim. Like many philosophers of these ages, he was not a Greek, but a Syrian,—a native of Gadara, on the skirts of the Anti-Libanus, he is often alluded to by Horace, Cicero, and Diogenes Laertius. In Caesar and Catullus, still more in Virgil and Horace, we detect traces of Epicureanism. One of the Lives of Virgil tells us how he lived for several years in leisurely freedom, after the manner and doctrine of Epicurus. And the words of

the Georgics which praise "the blessedness of him who has learnt the secrets of the world, and has laid beneath his feet all fears, and the doom which no man can escape and the din of Acheron craving its prey," are the genuine spirit of Epicurus and Lucretius. About the year 176 A. D., the Emperor Marcus Aurelius assigned to each of the four schools of ancient philosophy a yearly revenue of 10,000 Drachmae. Whether this sum went to a single professor, or was divided among several, we know not.

We are told the emperor left the choice of the professor to Herodes Atticus, the patron of Philosophy in that period. After his time the appointment seems to have been vested, probably, in the Areopus, who decided after hearing the competitors. Of these professors of Epicureanism we hear nothing. Aulus Gellius, who studied philos-

ophy at Athens while Herodes Atticus was there, hardly alludes to Epicureanism, save to quote the bitter words of Hierocles the Stoic: "Pleasure the end, is a harlot's doctrine." Longinus, who visited Athens for a similar purpose about 240 A. D., though the speaker of the teachers of other schools, does not even mention the Epicureans. Yet, if Epicureanism was not in good odour at the University of Athens, it would be a mistake to infer that it had been reduced to silence, its influence on human thought had become too great.

Tertullian, an early church-father, occasionally expressed his views on Epicureanism. While he contradicts the theological dogmas of the sect, uses languages which is in harmony with its fundamental principle. *Nihil est incorporale nisi quod non est*, (Nothing is incorporeal except the

non-existent). But, it seems to me, when he boldly declares that the Christian regards the teaching of secular literature as folly in the sight of God, he re-echoes in part the works of Epicurus.

(Lactantius, in his "Divine Institutes" (310 A. D.), has given a fine enumeration of the secondary causes which account for the spread of Epicureanism. "It tells the ignorant they need study no literature; it releases the niggardly from the duties of public beneficence; it forbids the loung-er to serve the State, the sluggard to work, and the coward to fight. The godless are told that the Gods are indifferent; the selfish and malevolent are ordered to give nothing to anyone, because the wise man does everything for his own sake. The recluse hears the praises of solitude, and the miser learns that life can be supported

on water and polenta. The man who hates his wife is presented with a list of blessings of celibacy:—the parent of a worthless offspring hears how good a thing is childlessness:—the children of impious parents are told that there is no natural obligation upon them.”

It is in a fairer tone that Gregory Nazianzen speaks of Epicurus as showing, by his temperate life, that the pleasure he preached was not the vulgar delights of license. No doubt this was the current interpretation; and it seems to have been in the mind of Augustine, when in unregenerate days, he would have given Epicureanism the palm, if only immortality had not turned the scale. There appeared sporadically with the Renaissance a naturalism, often licentious, which sometimes claimed kindred with Epicureanism.

Partly from a misconception of Christianity,

but still more from the peculiar conditions of mediæval existence, there had been a long divorce between the theology of the Church as such, and the life and language of ordinary humanity. The re-awakening of natural affections and instincts into a free and passionate life was one of the aspects of the Renaissance, in which Epicurean tendencies might be traced. The philosophic expression of this revolt and protest is found in a small dialogue by Lorenzo Valla, on Pleasure and True Good, written between 1430 and 1435. Here we find put into the mouth of a contemporary poet a glorification of nature and of the natural law of enjoyment.

The delights given through the senses—beautiful forms, musical tones, sweet tastes and smells are the first class of pleasures enumerated. But the advocate of pleasure goes a step further, and

even defends the relaxation of sexual restraints. The treatise is a crude and hasty generalization, made under a not inexcusable hatred of monachism and conventionality. It tunes into logical and systematic shape those demands of the heart and passions which can only claim our partial sympathy when presented in the colours of concrete life.

The same revival of the heart and the natural instincts is seen in a more mature and tranquil form when we look at Montaigne, Rabelais, or Erasmus. All of them, in their several peculiar ways, contend against conventionality, against the reign of asceticism,—all of them are humanists, in the wider sense of the word. The true Christian, says Erasmus, is the *true* Epicurean. Doctor Martin Luther, with Catharine von Bora, the nun, was a defiance to the theological morality

of the wicked cloister.

Rabelais substitutes for the conventual institutions of the past an Abbey where the restraints of formal rules are abolished, and makes the novitiate of young men and maidens the preparation and beginning of a useful, happy, and holy life. Montaigne writes with the mellowed and kindly cynism of the Epicurean sage.

It was the seventeenth century that Epicureanism reappeared as a system. In that age more than one effort was made to rehabilitate the philosophic schools of antiquity with the change necessary to accommodate them to Christendom. The most conspicuous of these efforts was the exposition and adaptation of the Epicurean system by Pierre Gassendi, one of the most eminent French philosophers of the seventeenth century, born of poor, but respectable parentage at

Champtercier, near Digne, in Provence, on the
thirty-second day of January, 1592.

He published works on the life, character and doctrine of Epicurus; also a commentary, on the Tenth book of Diogenes Laertius; likewise a systematic account of the Epicurean Philosophy in general. His ethics, over and above the discussion on freedom, which on the whole is indefinite, there is little beyond a milder statement of the Epicurean moral code. The final end of life is happiness, and happiness is harmony of soul and body, tranquillitas animi et indolentia corporis.

Probably, Gassendi thinks, perfect happiness is not attainable in this life, but it may be in the life to come. After pointing out the divergencies between Epicureanism and Christianity, he proceeded in a new work, the *syntagma Philosophicum*, to sketch a system in which he understood

to be the principles of Epicurus were carried out, except in those points, such as the nature and operations of God, and the immortality of the soul, where Epicureanism is un-Christian, and in the logical introduction where he went beyond his guides. It may be admitted that Gassendie's Epicureanism had an important influence on the general thought of the Seventeenth Century; that it has had any real importance in the history of philosophy my investigations cannot grant.

Several thinkers, atheists in a measure, revived Epicureanism in the French school of philosophy as Levesque de Ponilly,—Deslandes,—Miraband,—Lamettini,—Heloetius,—La Rochefoucauld,—D'Argeus,—Robinet,—Marechal,—Naigeon and others.

Their Epicurean and atheistic explanation of the mind worked a somewhat noticeable influence

upon the French people. However, posterity has been unkind to them for their works nearly all have been draped into the ocean of oblivion and forgetfulness. Truly, Epicurean Atheism, or Atheistic Epicureanism is the beginning of the end and can only hurl one eventually into "the very blackness of the darkness of despair!"

Jeremy Bentham and Auguste Comte, the positivist, in modern times recall Epicureanism in different ways, however. Bentham at his "Hermitage,"—a "unique, romantic-looking homestead," dark with the shade of ancient trees, conversing simply and gracefully with such friends as Dumont, Romilly, Brougham and James Mill,—not averse to good fare, and fond of flowers and music, may serve for a modern Epicurus.

In the case of Comte, we find enthusiastic disciples contributing towards the support of the

needy thinker, as in the days of Epicurus. The anti-theological character of Positivism, the humanistic religion in which it culminates, and the fete-days in the Positivist calendar, are features which have a certain similarity to Epicureanism.

PART II.

Epicureanism has had many adherents even at the present time, but these are, for the most part, men of no originality or independence as thinkers or scholars.

Hedonism—the doctrine which measures the worth of life by its pleasures—refuses, Proteus-like, to be caught in any definite shape. It appears often in the gross garb of sensuality; and sometimes in the gray abstractions of utilitarianism. It declines to recognize its idol in the dust and ashes to which the ethical analyst professes to reduce pleasure. Hedonism is an outcome of ancient Epicureanism. Its influence is atheistic-

ally bad, its deadly work positively sure, and its motto: "Dum vivimus, vivamus," is a true exposition of its ethics and metaphysics combined!

"Life for the hedonist is but an empty dream."

I cannot accept the saying of the poet:—"The light which led astray was light from heaven." Neither ethically nor metaphysically do I accept Epicureanism or its twin-sister, Hedonism. Instead, I would supplant Christianity, the Christians' God and the Holy Bible! No light from heaven (but darkness from Hell), ever led man astray. "The wisdom that is from *above* is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

Evidently, that is not light which leadeth astray, and whatever light does so, proves itself, by the very fact, to belong to the wisdom which

is not from above, but from beneath, and is as the German expostulates: "Ein satanisches Irrlicht." Scripture representations, give scope to every faculty, and holy direction to every power. They impart to the Present all the importance of the future, they stamp every individual with the signet of eternity, and they make him, in a great and vital sense, the fashioner of himself, for weal or for woe.

Goethe is a striking example of a man devoting his life to seeking his own culture with all the energy of commanding genius,—but Goethe was an Hedonist. Great as are the works of his genius, he missed that which is of highest worth, and the light of his intellect reveals more clearly his moral deficiencies.

Intent on personal culture and enjoyment *only*, he took little interest in the great political move-

ments of his time, which were changing the destiny of Europe and America and affecting all the interests of humanity. In Napoleon's invasion he fawned on the Conqueror of his people—unlike Fichte, who, as the enemy approached, dismissed his class with the inspiring words: "Gentlemen, we shall resume these lectures in a free country." The track of his life was strewn with crushed and cast-off loves, like orange-peels thrown away after he had sucked out all the sweetness. Great and lustrous like an iceberg, floating deep and towering high, moving majestic with the strength and swell of the ocean, effulgent in the sunshine, a mountain of light, but also a mountain of ice.

Plainly he never attained the true good. And this estimate of himself, he himself pronounced when in his old age he said: "I have ever been

esteemed one of fortune's favorites; nor can I complain of the course my life has taken. Yet, truly, there has been nothing but toil and care; and now in my 75th year I may say that I have never had four weeks of genuine pleasure. The stone was ever to be rolled anew. My annals will testify to the truth of what I now say." (Eckermann Conversations, Jan. 27th, 1824.) These are the words of an Epicurean and Hedonist. Contrast this with Paul's review of his life of self-sacrificing love: "I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that Day." Hedonism, the twin-sister of Epicureanism, is the necessary outcome of sensational

theories of knowledge; it is also incompatible with the recognition of Reason as a source of knowledge. It is consistent with Positivism and with every theory which in fact restricts knowledge to the phenomena of sense.

It is practical atheism to insist that the *sum bonum* is the aggregate of enjoyment from all sources, measured only by quantity; with no reference to the truth and law of the Absolute, viz.: a loving God. He sees pleasure, enjoyment only in self-sufficiency, self-will, self-seeking, self-indulgence, self-serving and self-glorifying.

In this character and state of mind; if he estimates the good only by the quantity of enjoyment, he will be led entirely away from virtue, truth, justice and God. He not only will not choose it, but he will not see it as Good.

He must make a new supreme choice and form

a new character in order to appreciate the blessedness of a life of self-renouncing faith and love. If our Lord should speak to him, he would say as to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born anew he cannot see the Kingdom of God." The Epicureanism of a Hobbes or the infidelity of a Lord Herbert of Cherburry and their cohorts of speculative one-sided thinking as well as their schools generally have never offered the world a code of ethical principles upon which to build to promote actual wisdom, love, generosity, liberty or salvation *after* life, which even metaphysically considered could never elevate our aspirations, expand our souls or even beneficially stimulate our mental powers. Man may not be able to pre-arrange circumstances in life, but, by the help of Almighty God, "in Whom we live and move, and have our being," he may conquer them, and sub-

due them to good. No two ships have precisely the same path, and are struck, at the same angle, by precisely the same winds, but the helmsman accommodates himself to this; and makes the most of the winds which the Supreme Ruler is pleased to send.

Critically speaking: Epicureanism narrows down our life to a very point; stripping it of all that is distinctive and elevating, both in range and duration, and shutting us up within the miserable limits of time and sense.

Firstly, *It takes all soul out of Life.*—The soul is its enemy, and a regard for its interests would be the very death of such a life. The soul goeth upward, God is its portion and heaven is its home. The Epicurean life is a life which has its stronghold simply in the flesh, and it goes outward only to those objects which minister to that. This is

the radius and limit of its range ; it has no affinities beyond this sphere, and so the soul goes practically out of life in two ways: *First*, by neglect. It receives no nourishment, it gets no attention, but speedily becomes shrivelled and powerless as an unused limb. The whole strength of life is drained off in another and an opposite direction, and the great soul of the man—that which makes him a man—becomes nothing in the world. Simply, “Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die.” And, *secondly*, through over-indulgence in things which are opposed to its nature. It is stifled and overlaid by the flesh, the tyranny of sense becomes irresistible, and absolute, and the whole life of the man is a gratification of those fleshly lusts that war against the soul.

(Domitian at Rome and Catharine the Second of Russia are pointed out as the example warning

against lawless lusts for pleasures.)

Secondly. Epicureanism takes the very intellect out of our life.—For its own sake, at least, there is no recognition of it. It may be employed as an instrument to devise new forms of pleasure, and new modes of carrying them into effect, but nothing more. It is the minister of sense, the convenient purveyor for its appetites, the demon in the herd of swine, impelling us down the steep of ignominious concession, into the foul sea of sensuality and indulgence.

Thirdly. It takes all the future out of our life.—In fact, there is no future about it. Life is a thing to be enjoyed and to be done with, to have all the pleasure selected out of it and then painful experiences if possible or avoided tossed aside. We are a curious compound, it says, of nerves, and muscles, and appetites, and we find

ourselves in a world which answers them bravely. Let us live while we may, and then get buried out of sight. How much more grand, elevating and sublime the precepts of the Master in his sermon on the mount, what gracious promises revealed in the New Testament, what a beautiful home over there for those who love and believe in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World.

Let man go abroad with just Christian principles, and what is he? A mighty power, an exhaustless fountain in a vast dessert, a glorious sunshining, ever dispelling every vestige of darkness.

There is love animating his heart, sympathy breathing in every tone. Beneath his smiles lurk no degrading passions. Within his breast there slumbers no guile. His just and Christian principles promote beneficent influences. A good man,

philosopher, is abroad, and the world knows and feels it.

Character is the sustaining glory of individual greatness, the Doric and splendid column in the majestic structure of a true and dignified manhood. To earth belongs his corruptible body, but to another and more enlarged sphere his soul, stamped with divinity. It is not the principle of Bacchanalian revelry. Thespian exercises, or harlequin buffoonery, that the writer advocates, but the universal diligence of a righteous Dr. Martin Luther, a Jonathan Edwards, a Bishop Butler, a Bunyan, a benevolent Howard, an enterprising Fulton, a Morse, a Dr. Charles P. Krauth, a Dr. Joseph A. Seiss, a Dr. George F. Krotel, a Luthardt and a Walther. But for such as they, many a heart would be cold as death, many a mortal languishing in distress. Man is his own

star, and that soul that can be honest is the only perfect man. (Philosopher.) His honesty to me is like an anchor, not for calm days, but for storms. The anchor may be decked with flowers at times, and in a harbor may rest at the bow and silently promulgate its idea of usefulness.

But, when the vessel is out on its path, and there comes a night attended with storm and darkness, not a single star appearing, then it is that the old mass of iron seems to glory in its ruggedness, and leaving its ideal festoons upon the deck, in the gloomy midnight, it drops into the deep, and grasps the solid earth with its gigantic arms.

Whilst the church performs her labor on earth, the roaring gulf of human passion and hatred will be calmed by the voice of peace. Activity and exertion are the crystal waters that turn the

moral machinery of the universe. "Go ye into all the world, and preach my gospel,"—was a divine injunction. But heaven's temple on earth must be built by man, that the fire of benevolence may burn on the altars of the human heart more vividly, and that sympathy with her highest blessing might turn all the nations of the earth.

In the solemn ecstasy of a St. Paul, the devout Christian may always say:

"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

I. Cor., 15, 57.

*"Philosophy seeks the truth,
Theology finds it, Religion possesses it."*
John Picus, Prince of Mirandola.

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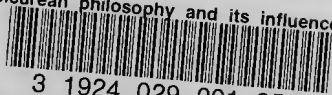
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